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Interdisciplinarity on campus: how the publishing world is responding

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Interdisciplinarity on campus: how the publishing world is responding

Abstract

Purpose—The purpose of this article is to explore how the publishing world is responding to library collection development challenges posed by the growth of interdisciplinary studies programs.

Design/methodology/approach—The first step in this study was a survey of the websites of selected ARL and all Oberlin Group university and college websites to determine those institutions that have a clearly identified Interdisciplinary program or majors. The authors then investigated the status of interdisciplinary collection development practices at these institutions. Finally the websites of reviewers, publishers, and vendors were surveyed to explore what tools are available to help librarians identify new interdisciplinary monographs.

Findings—Rather than supplying formal interdisciplinary collection development support, most librarians rely on external resources to help identify interdisciplinary materials. As technology evolves publisher/vendor websites can provide librarians with the tools needed to conduct in-depth searches of their catalogs, thus aiding in the identification of interdisciplinary monographs for purchase.

Originality/value—Building on previous scholarship about the growth of interdisciplinary studies and libraries, this paper extends the research by examining the tools available to help librarians bridge the gap created by new disciplinary formations and offers suggestions for publishers to enhance interdisciplinary selection.

Keywords

Collection development, Collections management, Book selection, Interdisciplinary studies, Interdisciplinarity, Publishers, Book vendors

Disciplines

Library and Information Science

Comments

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**INTERDISCIPLINARITY ON CAMPUS: HOW THE PUBLISHING
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Review

INTERDISCIPLINARITY ON CAMPUS: HOW THE PUBLISHING WORLD IS RESPONDING

INTRODUCTION

Interdisciplinary programs, centers, and majors have been created on university campuses for a variety of reasons over the past several decades. William Newell (2001, p.5) identified seven diverse motivations behind the creation of interdisciplinary programs that include education and training, problem solving and critiques, faculty development, financial exigency, and the production of new knowledge. Programs created in the 1960s and '70s in support of Women's studies and Native American studies were likely to have had some political or sociological forces behind them. This created a natural teaming-up of disciplines to address these broad areas of study. In the past decade campus-wide financial exigency and downsizing has been another driving force behind the creation of interdisciplinary programs. Pick up almost any newspaper and you can find an article about the impact of shrinking budgets in higher education today. Unfortunately even though budgets are shrinking, costs at every level continue to rise. In an effort to deal with this new reality faculty and staff are being asked to do more with less. While the concept of interdisciplinary studies has been debated and discussed within the academy for many years, the advantages of transcending disciplinary boundaries and bringing departments together appears to be one cost conscious solution that may be gaining momentum. Thompson (2010, p. 9) writes that "these questions are all the more pressing in a new period of financial exigency driven by an international economic crisis." By combining departments, services can be streamlined, duplications eliminated, and costs better contained. Interdisciplinary Centers that combine two or more academic disciplines or fields of research also figure prominently on many campuses.

College and University libraries need to adapt not only to smaller budgets and shrinking staffs, but to what may eventually be a very different institutional configuration. As librarians we need to continually consider the challenges that interdisciplinary studies pose given our institutional responsibilities. How do we identify books that best serve the needs of interdisciplinary scholars? How can we use

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3 vendor/publishers, to whom we already pay large amounts of money, to help us identify new
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5 interdisciplinary monographs? Researching and answering these last questions is the main focus of this
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7 article.
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10 11 12 **LITERATURE REVIEW** 13

14 While most research universities are still organized into academic departments, scholars and researchers
15
16 are forming new collaborations to work on increasingly complex questions. At times these collaborations
17
18 transcend disciplinary boundaries and as a result new interdisciplinary models have emerged. One of the
19
20 issues raised by Allen Repko (2008) is that, although interdisciplinary studies produce new knowledge via
21
22 a process of integration, in many cases scholars still rely on specific disciplines for their source materials.
23
24 (Repko 2008, p.3, 5, 8, 9) For the most part academic libraries have been organized to reflect and support
25
26 the departmental structure. As interdisciplinary research increases librarians are being challenged to
27
28 rethink how libraries are organized and how our collection development process should be adapted to
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30 support the interdisciplinary model.
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36 How libraries are dealing with this shift has been explored in library literature for a number of years.
37
38 Wilson & Edelman (1996) examined the growth of interdisciplinarity in the academy by analyzing the use
39
40 of the term “interdisciplinary research” in *Dissertation Abstracts International*. They found a rise from
41
42 12 dissertations using that term in 1861-1981 to 23 during 1993-1995. An updated search of this database
43
44 highlights how fast this trend has accelerated. A search for the term “interdisciplinary research” from
45
46 1996-2010 now yields 241 results. This article also raises budgetary concerns by pointing out that
47
48 “budget allocations based on existing departmental structures will not adequately address collection
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50 development issues, particularly in interdisciplinary fields served by networked information.” (Wilson
51
52 and Edelman, 1996 p.199)
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According to Hickey & Arlen (2002), the traditional structure of academic libraries works against interdisciplinary studies. By focusing on an analysis of book reviews in four scholarly history journals, they explore how disciplines overlap departmental boundaries. Through their analysis they discovered that 55% of the titles reviewed were “non-history” titles. This leaves bibliographers with the task of figuring out how to cover the cost of acquiring materials they are not funded to purchase. Other articles use different subject areas to explore this same question (Chuben, Porter, and Rossini, 1984; Searing 1992; Hurd, 1992). In their 2004 article Dilevko and Dali suggest that librarians use an analysis of citation patterns to help identify interdisciplinary titles for collection development. While mainly concerned with exploring how to develop core journal lists this article shows how a detailed analysis of LC classes and subclasses used by scholars can help librarians “get a detailed sense of how interdisciplinary scholars do their intellectual work, thus allowing them to better understand and anticipate the future information needs of these scholars.” (Hickey and Arlen, 2002 p.216)

Patron-driven acquisitions (PDA), or selection based on usage by end-users, can also pick up many interdisciplinary titles that fall through the cracks of normal collection development activities. This includes purchasing books submitted as ILL requests when they meet certain criteria. Research from Purdue done at two (2002) year and at ten (2010) year intervals since the implementation of PDA programs Anderson, Freeman, Hérubel, Mykytiuk, Nixon, Ward (2002) showed that books selected through a PDA program expanded the cross-disciplinary nature of the collection.

Library Collection Development Support for Interdisciplinary Studies

In the fall of 2010 the authors surveyed 79 Oberlin Group and 99 (U.S. academic only) Association of Research Libraries (ARL) university websites to find out which institutions offer Interdisciplinary Studies (IS), or similar titled, majors. Forty-four Oberlin Group and fifty-four Association of Research Libraries (ARL) institutions clearly offer Interdisciplinary Studies majors.

Of the 54 ARL institutions with IS majors, nine have a library with a clearly designated IS collection development librarian or team. There are at least two other variations on this type of support: librarians designated for program-related interdisciplinary majors (African American Studies, LGBT studies, Interdisciplinary Art, etc.), and a “General” librarian or one who covers all subject areas. Team support is another support method. Two examples of well identified team support efforts are at the University of Utah (International and Interdisciplinary Team) and the University of California at Berkeley (Contacts for Cross-Disciplinary and Format-Based Resources). This approach may allow these institutions to more effectively identify those subject areas and types of materials that often fall through the cracks of traditional collection development models. There are also institutions where it is impossible to tell who provides the support as the only online access is via an “Ask-A-Librarian form.”

Although they do not all call them interdisciplinary studies majors, 44 of the 79 colleges in the Oberlin group have some such degree program. Of these institutions 10 Oberlin libraries have an identified IS collection development librarian. Many of the Oberlin libraries have such small staffs that a large number do not identify subject librarians at all.

Choice: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries

Finding a lack of formal collection development support for interdisciplinary studies left us wondering what other tools might be available to help librarians tasked with these collections development responsibilities. *Choice*, an ALA/ACRL publication, has long been an authoritative resource for the selection of academic library books and other materials. It has been identifying interdisciplinary monographs as such for over 15 years. *Choice* editor Irving Rockwood introduced readers to this new index, called the “Topical Index” in the print December 1995 issue. According to Rockwood (1995, p. 562) the index was created “as an attempt to solve a problem with which we have long wrestled, namely how to identify titles whose subject matter may be legitimately classified as both disciplinary or

interdisciplinary.” Cross-references to the appropriate disciplinary heading from the “Topical Index” were also put into place. The name was changed to “Interdisciplinary Index” with the December 2004 issue.

The overall number of subjects covered by this index has grown. Below is a comparative list illustrating the subjects *Choice* included in the “topical” and “interdisciplinary” indexes. “*Choice Reviews Online*,” offers an advanced search feature that includes the 15 “Interdisciplinary Categories” listed below for December 2010. Some *Choice* content is available free, but most content is accessible only with a paid subscription.

December 1995	December 2004	December 2010
African and African American Studies	African and African American Studies	African and African American Studies
Asian and Asian American Studies	Asian and Asian American Studies	Asian and Asian American Studies
Environmental Studies	Classical Studies	Canadian Studies
Food and Agriculture	Electronic Resources	Classical Studies
Latina/o Studies	Environmental Studies	Electronic Resources
Native American Studies	Food and Agriculture	Environmental Studies
Urban Studies	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Studies	Food and Agriculture
Women’s Studies	Latin American & Latina/o Studies	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Studies
	Middle Eastern Studies	Islamic Studies
	Native American Studies	Latin American & Latina/o Studies
	Urban Studies	Law & Society
	Women’s Studies	Middle Eastern Studies
		Native American Studies
		Urban Studies
		Women’s & Gender Studies

Publisher/Vendor Online Catalogs and Databases

If, as Wilson and Edelman (1996, p. 196) suggest, interdisciplinary studies are a growing trend as indicated by the increasing number of interdisciplinary subject areas identified by *Choice* in the

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3 intervening years, then how will libraries continue to evolve to meet the new challenges this trend brings?

4
5 Can we rely on book vendors and publishers to help with this task?

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10 In an effort to explore the impact of the move towards interdisciplinary studies on library book vendors a
11
12 survey of their web sites was conducted. A first step in that process was identifying a comprehensive list
13
14 of “academic” book vendors. There are a number of very comprehensive lists of book vendors available
15
16 online. AquWeb, an international directory of publishers and vendors, can be viewed at:

17
18 <http://www.acqweb.org/pubr.html>. The links on their list are not limited to vendors who supply books to
19
20 academic institutions and many of the vendors on this list are located overseas. The American
21
22 Association of University Professors also maintains a good list at:

23
24 http://www.aaupnet.org/index.php?option=com_contact&view=category&catid=7&Itemid=18

25
26 However, for the most part the AAUP list is limited to "university presses" and does not include some of
27
28 the other publishers commonly used by academic libraries (i.e. Routledge, Norton, Random House,
29
30 Greenwood). For purposes of this paper we wanted to narrow our focus to U.S. vendors who supply and
31
32 market their books to “academic” libraries. After exploring a number of other options we decided to rely
33
34 on an extensive publisher and vendor list compiled by the Department of Philosophy at Penn State
35
36 University. This list best fit our needs and provided quick links to some of the most frequently used
37
38 suppliers, publishers, and university presses. It can be accessed at:

39
40
41 <http://philosophy.la.psu.edu/Resources/Vendors.html>

42
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47 After analyzing the 33 U.S. publisher/vendor sites found on the Penn State list, we grouped them into
48
49 three major categories based on their approach to identifying and making accessible interdisciplinary
50
51 titles. *In-depth* sites allow for enhanced search and sort options, and many of them include a Google
52
53 search box which allows for full- text searching of keywords. *Mixed sites* allow for some search and sort
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options, but do not allow for as granular a search as the in-depth sites. Finally the *Limited sites* provide basic search functions with limited if any sort options.

Sixteen of the sites surveyed provided multiple points of access and allow for in-depth searching of their catalogs/databases. While not all sites included “interdisciplinary studies” as one of their subject categories, using those words as a search term provides users with an extensive list of resources. In addition, many of these sites incorporated a Google Smart Search box while also allowing users to refine their search results by publication date, relevance, format or other subcategory areas.

One caveat worth mentioning in terms of publisher/vendor websites relates to the constant evolution of technology available on the web. During the time we were working on this article many of the websites underwent upgrades and changes. A web site with a “Mixed” or “Limited” approach today may quickly evolve into one that provides a more in-depth approach to its users.

Presses/Databases roughly categorized:

In-depth approach

Wiley
Blackwell
Columbia
Cornell
MacMillan
Norton
Perseus
Princeton
Routledge
Oxford
Rutgers
Rowman & Littlefield
Temple
University of California
Coutts
YBP

Mixed

Pearson
Random House
Beacon
Indiana
MIT
Stanford
SUNY
Harvard
Midwest Library Service
Ambassador Books & Media
Book House

Limited

Fordham
Greenwood
Penguin
Northwestern
Chicago
Yale

Princeton University Press <http://press.princeton.edu/> is one example of an in-depth approach. The “browse the Princeton catalog by subject” option includes a number of “interdisciplinary” subject areas

such as gender studies. The page also includes search boxes for keyword, author, title, ISBN, and more options. A keyword search using the term “interdisciplinary” resulted in a message stating “limit of 200 hits exceeded” and gave an option to select either “More options” or “Power search” to continue. Clicking “more options” provides users with a quick search box. This box searches the author, title, and keywords in the descriptive text and allows for Boolean searching. This option has a 1000 record limit. Power search includes the same options as quick search plus other advanced features such as selecting whether the user wants their search to match ANY of the fields or ALL the fields, opt for partial word matches or fixed string matches, in addition it allows for misspellings of up to four characters. The other two search boxes on this site are Google search boxes. The first allows for a Google search of the site only and the second allows users to “Google the full text of all our books.”

Random House <http://www.randomhouse.com/acmart/> is one of eleven vendors that fall into a category we call “Mixed.” These sites provide some detailed search options, but are more limited than those providing an in-depth approach. The Random House home page includes a left navigation bar organized by subject areas. Some subjects are further divided into subcategories. When users click on a subject area results are listed by title and can be sorted by Author, Date, Format, price or title. However, using the advanced search option with the word interdisciplinary as a keyword only resulted in ten titles being identified. Similar to other sites in this category, Boolean searching is not supported.

Finally, six of the thirty-three sites fall into the “Limited” category. Fordham University <http://www.fordhampress.com/> is one of those publishers. This home page includes three search boxes – search our site, search our catalog, or choose a subject search. Interdisciplinary Studies is not listed as one of the subject search options. A catalog search using that term only results in five titles. Using a keyword search, one of the options listed under the “books” tab, results in a mix of university and book related links. Clicking on the “search our catalog” link resulted in a very limited list of titles. These

titles were arranged alphabetically, but there was no indication of how many titles were pulled, or what subcategories each title belonged to. There was no other option for sorting these results.

Vendors’ Proprietary Databases

The authors’ next step was to search five proprietary databases available to selectors through book wholesalers: Ambassador Books & Media (OneSource), Midwest Library Service (InterACQ), and Book House (Order System), YBP (GOBI), and Coutts (OASIS™). Each requires a login and password for access.

Ways of finding interdisciplinary materials in these databases ranges from simplistic to complex. Within Ambassador, Midwest, and Book House a known title search is easily retrieved. A selector can also select to receive books within a specific or general LC classification range. More generic ways of searching could include a Title or Subject search for “interdisciplinary” as a keyword or exact phrase. A representative from Book House stated: “We have found when doing a keyword search using the subject field is the most efficient. We were able to bring up around 50 titles by using interdisciplinary in a subject search.” (Book House, 2011) YBP Library Services and Coutts offer more sophisticated interfaces.

YBP Library Services

YBP’s platform, Global Online Bibliographic Information (GOBI), is an online acquisition and collection management support system. GOBI has 3 search types: Quick Search, Standard Search, and Advanced Search. Standard Search provides a list of 80+ “Interdisciplinary Topics” to incorporate into a search. Individual or multiple interdisciplinary terms can be searched in combination with other Standard Search parameters. Figure 1 shows a GOBI Standard Search screen.

Figure 1 caption: YBP Library Services, GOBI³ database, standard search screen

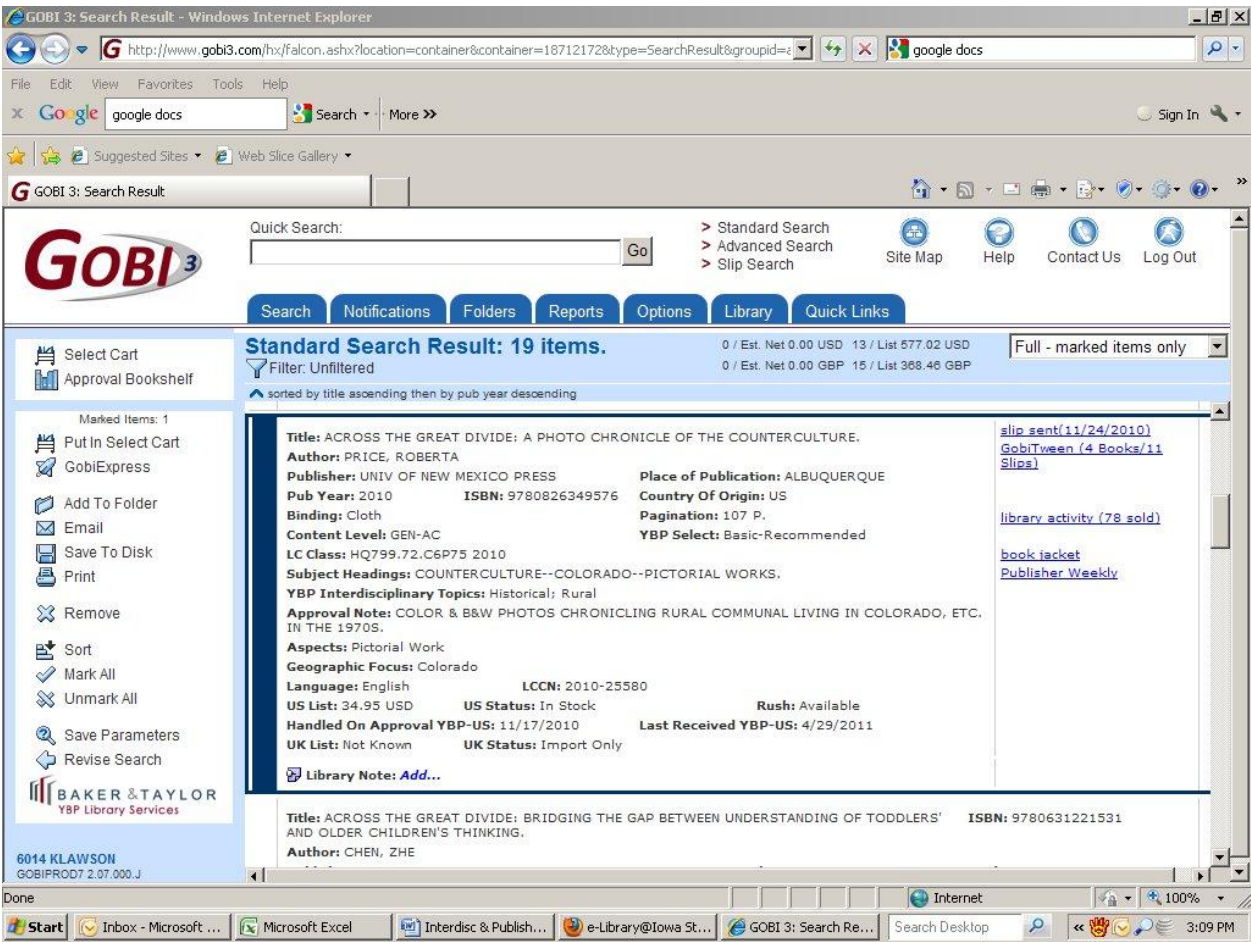
The screenshot displays the GOBI 3 Standard Search web application. The browser window title is "GOBI 3: Standard Search - Windows Internet Explorer". The address bar shows the URL "http://www.gobi3.com/hx/Falcon.ashx?location=searchstandardparms". The page features a "GOBI 3" logo and a "Quick Search" field with a "Go" button. Navigation tabs include "Search", "Notifications", "Folders", "Reports", "Options", "Library", and "Quick Links". On the left, there are links for "Select Cart", "Approval Bookshelf", "Clear Form", "Retrieve Parameters", and "Go". The main search area is titled "Standard Search" and contains several filter sections: "Pub Year" (with a date range selector), "eBook" (with checkboxes for "Exclude eBooks" and "Only show downloadable items"), "Date Added" (with a date range selector), "Supplier" (a dropdown menu showing options like BRILL ONLINE, Cambridge UP Online, CQ PRESS ONLINE, Duke Univ. Press, and EBL), and "Language" (a dropdown menu showing options like Arabic, Bulgarian, Chinese, Croatian, and Czech). On the right, there are fields for "ISBN", "Series Title" (with a "10 or 13 digit" option), "Approval Note", "Subject Headings", and "Interdisciplinary Topics" (a dropdown menu showing options like Rural, Science, Social Work, Speech and Hearing Impair, and TV Tie-in). The bottom status bar shows the system clock as 3:05 PM.

[Figure 1]

For example, a search of “Pub Year > 2010” and “Language – English” and the Interdisciplinary Topic “Rural” yields 242 results.

The example in Figure 2 shows the full record for the first title retrieved, Across the Great Divide: a photo chronicle of the counterculture. The YBP assigned subject heading is: Counterculture – Colorado Pictorial Works. YBP interdisciplinary topics assigned are “Historical” and “Rural.”

Figure 2 caption: YBP Library Services, GOBI³ database, search results for “Interdisciplinary Descriptors”



[Figure 2]

WorldCat record subject headings assigned for Across the Great Divide are:

- Counterculture -- Colorado -- Pictorial works.
- Counterculture -- New Mexico -- Pictorial works.
- Colorado -- Rural conditions -- Pictorial works.
- New Mexico -- Rural conditions -- Pictorial works.
- Colorado -- Social life and customs -- 20th century.
- New Mexico -- Social life and customs -- 20th century.

GOBI's Advanced Search feature offers the same list of interdisciplinary topics (called "Interdisciplinary Descriptors") but goes further to allow multiple interdisciplinary descriptors to be combined using Boolean operators. An interdisciplinary descriptor can be composed into a query along with a call number range, publisher, or subject headings. There are also 2 lists of pre-defined categories that can be used in combination these search terms: Geographic Descriptors and Non-Subject Descriptors (e.g., aspect, format, literary type).

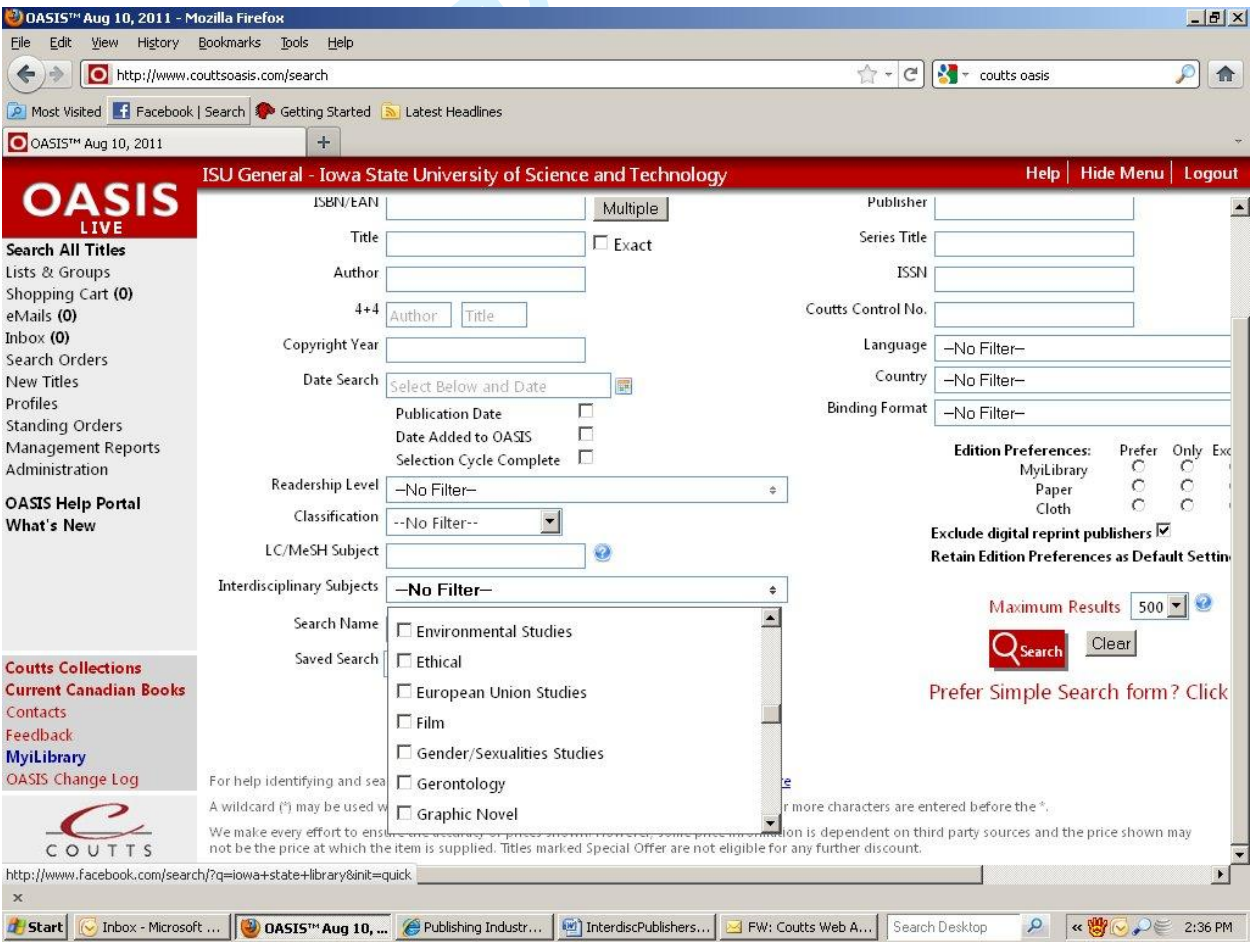
Coutts

OASIS™ is an "online interface for bibliographic information and searching, book and e-book acquisition, collection development and workflow management." Its "Search All Titles" menu screen offers a wide variety of search options. Figure 3 shows the "Interdisciplinary Subjects" filter that has 62 choices, including Aboriginal/Native Studies, AIDS, Canadiana, Gerontology, Graphic Novel, Islamic Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, Pacific Rim, Reference, and Women's Studies. Each OASIS™ full record displays all assigned LC subject headings, as well as Coutts subject terms.

Figure 3 caption: Coutts, OASIS™ database, Interdisciplinary Subjects Filter screen

Coutts

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[Figure 3]

CONCLUSIONS

Disciplinary boundaries are increasingly collapsing with the combining of academic programs and the blurring of traditional academic fields in the changing technological and global environment. Klein (2010, p. 2) writes that “Interdisciplinarity is associated with bold advances in knowledge, solutions to urgent societal problems, an edge in technological innovation, and a more integrative educational experience.” These changes appear to be accelerating and libraries have to try to adapt to them. Although a search of university and college websites finds a myriad of interdisciplinary programs, institutes and courses, this activity is not mirrored on the infrastructure of most academic libraries. Relatively few libraries seem to have subject specialists devoted to interdisciplinary subject areas or even subject pages or collection development policies that address those issues. This is probably due to the fact that it can be more difficult to identify interdisciplinary materials. Traditional models are not very effective as call number ranges based on subject areas do not adequately address interdisciplinary topics. Librarians would appear to be relying on vendors and external resources such as *Choice*, YBP and individual publishers to identify interdisciplinary materials.

The identification of interdisciplinary monographs by individual publishers also varies a great deal. Some publishers thoroughly cover interdisciplinary topics with extensive search options to identify such publications, while others barely address the issue. In some cases this may be due to the fact that the size of their catalog makes any extensive subject classification unnecessary. Many of the more sophisticated publisher web sites have integrated Google Smart Search into their search options and this greatly increases the ability to identify interdisciplinary titles.

Many libraries make extensive use of book wholesalers' websites for the majority of their selection, not just because of the ease of seeing many new titles in a single list, but also for the assistance they provide with expedited labor-saving on-line ordering and other added value services like preprocessing. Vendor assigned indexing may identify interdisciplinary materials, and in addition these websites can provide the ability to create monograph searches using extensive lists of interdisciplinary-related subject terms. Interdisciplinary descriptors assigned by book vendors could be valuable metadata for bibliographic records.

Sara Lloyd, head of digital publishing at Pan Macmillan, wrote in *A Book Publisher's Manifesto for the Twenty-first Century* (2008, p. 31): "Publishers ... will need to increasingly accept huge cultural, social, economic, and educational changes and respond to these in a positive and creative way." Taking advantage of technological innovations is one way of leveling the playing field for a publisher or book vendors. For example, in terms of a web presence, the size of company and its physical inventory matter less than its technical expertise and innovation.

A prototype for including more information that would be helpful to selectors exists with ONIX (ONline Information Exchange) for books. ONIX allows publishers to use standardized data fields to transmit information about books to vendors or databases. It is an XML-based standard format that "publishers can use to distribute electronic information about their books to wholesale, e-tail and retail booksellers, other publishers, and anyone else involved in the sale of books. ONIX enables book information to be communicated between different organizations even if they have different technical infrastructures and business needs" (BISG, 2011). It is possible that the ONIX platform or something similar would be helpful in getting more data into publisher and vendor selection websites.

Interdisciplinary studies offer students and researchers new ways to solve problems and to produce new knowledge. Publishers could be providing a positive and creative service for libraries and interdisciplinary studies programs by enhancing selection of interdisciplinary materials.

For Peer Review

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